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County leaders taking cautious approach to impact fees

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Troy Mayor Tom Caraker said impact fees to benefit Triad School District 2 will be successful only if municipalities and Madison County work together, but county leaders are requiring municipalities to act first.

The Triad School Board voted last week to make formal presentations to Troy, St. Jacob and Marine about impact fees and its need for alternative funding to build schools to accommodate the district's rapid growth.

Triad Superintendent Mike Johnson has said the district's population is projected to grow by 60 percent from 2004 to 2012. The district is asking voters through referendum this month for a \$44.3 million bond issue for four major construction and building projects.

"It's not: 'Build it and they will come.' It's they're already here," Johnson said. "We could be spending the money on textbooks and supplies, but instead it's being spent on facilities."

Madison County Board member Bob Daiber, D-Marine, said the county will not address the adoption of the fees until all the municipalities in the school district adopt them.

But Caraker said before Troy acts on the fees, it wants assurance that the county also intends to adopt them. He suggests a joint meeting between leaders from Troy, St. Jacob, Marine and the County Board.

"I would not recommend passage of impact fees unless all tax bodies are equal, including Madison County," Caraker said. "If the Madison County Board implies that it will adopt the fees and then chooses later not to move forward, I will request a motion to abolish any impact fees already imposed by the city of Troy."

Impact fees are assessed on new residential development. Developers pay the fee on a per-lot basis, and the money is used to build schools. Metro-east communities, such as Edwardsville, have established the fees to offset the increasing costs that come with rising enrollment. By state statute, money generated from impact fees can only be used for building construction and land purchase.

"We want to emulate ordinances that have been successful for other school districts, such as Edwardsville," Johnson said.

St. Jacob Mayor Ray Muniz said he supports impact fees.

"It's not a solution to building new buildings, but it will help to offset the cost of it," he said.

Marine Mayor John Deppe said he understands the need for alternative funding, but wants first to make sure the fees will not slow down the village's sluggish growth.

"I don't want it to affect the growth we feel we will need for the long term," Deppe said. He said most of Triad's

growth is in Troy, St. Jacob and unincorporated portions of Madison County.

The district will work with impact fee expert attorney Richard Flood of Crystal Lake, near Chicago, to draft an ordinance. It also has authorized Johnson to begin a growth and land study to determine a proper fee amount and prove the district's extreme growth to the County Board.

The study is required by the County Board, which approved a resolution earlier this year outlining a process school districts must complete before it votes to enact impact fees in unincorporated areas. The process requires that districts first get all municipal governments within their jurisdictions to adopt the impact fee ordinance.

"Many board members felt that if the board enacted (impact fees) now, it would be premature before the studies are conducted," said Daiber, who also serves as chairman of the county's planning and development committee.

Roughly one-third of the County Board's 29 members live in areas where impact fees are in place or school districts considering the fees.

In 2004, the Edwardsville District 7 went to its municipalities, asking for impact fees. To date, the city of Edwardsville and the village of Glen Carbon are collecting those fees. The village of Hamel approved the ordinance with the stipulation that it would not collect the fees until Madison County enacted the fees also.

Dave Courtney, the district's business director, said the district has collected more than \$50,000 from homes being built in new subdivisions such as Ebbetts Field in Edwardsville and Savannah Crossing in Glen Carbon. District 7 officials expect the impact fees will generate an additional \$1.8 million to \$2.7 million for the district over the next several years.

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